

Testimony Prepared for the  
**House Transportation Committee**

January 23, 2025

By: Nick West, Grand Forks County Engineer & NDACE Legislative Committee



**RE: Opposition for HB 1407 – Relating to Weight Limitations for Vehicles (113,000 lbs)**

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1407. I am Nick West, the Grand Forks County Engineer, and I also serve as the past president and a member of the legislative committee for the ND Association of County Engineers (NDACE).

Over the past few sessions there has been a desire to increase the allowable weight of trucks in ND. There may have been others, but the two that come to mind in recent history are: in 2017 there was the 129,000 initiative, (which had limited success), in 2021 there was the road trains initiative, which turned into a study, but failed to progress further.

NDACE understands the need to increase truck weights to improve the efficiencies of the movement of goods. I applaud the legislators for continuing to fight for ways to find these efficiencies. However, we need to balance the road and bridge network that has to carry this additional weight. Therefore, the NDACE is opposed to HB 1407 as it's currently written. If the weight of trucks is allowed to increase, there needs to be a financial component to address the roads and particularly the bridges accordingly.

A handful of years ago the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) implemented a change to how bridges are inspected and load rated. In a nutshell, the inspections are more detailed and documented and the ratings are more conservative. Therefore, all major bridges in ND have gone through this new process in the past four years, and it was expensive. For example, Grand Forks County has 250-major structures, the total cost to inspect and load rate those bridges between 2021 and 2024 was \$2,099,494, of which the County paid \$400,316.

Any County or Township bridge (not sure about State bridges), that would be allowed to have a 113,000 pound truck drive over it on a regular basis, would need to be re-load rated. The question then remains, who would pay for that load rating. Making this change would most certainly increase the number of bridges with a ton limit.

We understand each jurisdiction would have the authority to choose whether or not to allow the 113,000 pound trucks. For those jurisdictions that choose not to allow, they would need to put up signs or find some way to notify the traveling public of the allowable weights. There would be a financial component to this.

Chairman Ruby and committee members, the NDACE would ask for a Do Not Pass committee recommendation as its currently written but are open to amendments.

Thank you for your time and service to North Dakota, Nick West.